



State of New Jersey

OFFICE OF THE CHILD ADVOCATE

135 WEST HANOVER STREET - 3RD FLOOR

PO Box 092

TRENTON, NJ 08625-0092

JAMES E. MCGREEVEY
Governor

KEVIN RYAN
Child Advocate

April 13, 2004

The Honorable Jon Corzine
United States Senate
502 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Lautenberg
United States Senate
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Corzine and Lautenberg:

As the Senate Appropriations Committee considers its FY 2005 Commerce, Justice, and State appropriations bill, I urge you to restore critical funding to support state juvenile justice efforts to reduce crime and delinquency. The FY 2005 proposed budget slashes juvenile justice funding by more than 40 percent. Our country, our communities and our children simply cannot afford this cut to programs that are literally lifelines for at-risk youth.

To keep all children and youth safe and out of trouble, additional funds must be provided to continue to support youth development and prevention efforts. Research has conclusively shown that early investment in youth development and prevention programs can dramatically reduce youth crime and violence – on an economic scale, estimates range from \$4-\$7 in savings for every \$1 invested. To this end, we ask that the Committee make a strong commitment to keep children and youth safe from harm and to help children and youth realize their full potential by funding investment in the Title V Community Prevention Grants Program, the Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) Program, and the Delinquency Prevention Block Grant Program.

The Title V Community Prevention Grants Program is an effective model of community collaboration in which community stakeholders – including locally elected officials, law enforcement, public recreation, private nonprofit organizations, and youth workers – come together to develop a plan for juvenile delinquency prevention. Title V provides states with matching funds for community based prevention programs that include primary prevention aimed at high-risk youth with no prior contact with law enforcement.

Despite its success in over 1,200 communities nationwide, proposed Title V funding for FY 2005 is cut by over 40% to \$44.4 million, and we are deeply concerned that all but \$7.4 million is earmarked for other programs. We ask that the Committee expand Title V Community Prevention Grants Programs to at least \$95 million in FY2005, which was the historic level at which Title V was funded prior to FY 2003.

The Juvenile Accountability Block Grant provides states and units of local government with funds to develop programs to promote greater accountability in the juvenile justice system. The 2002 reauthorized Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPa) expanded JABG's reach to provide additional services and treatment for troubled youth. By supporting these additional purposes, JABG provides needed resources to proven strategies for rehabilitating adjudicated youth, as well as reducing juvenile recidivism rates. Despite a favorable evaluation funded by the Department of Justice detailing multi-tiered successes at the state and local levels, the JBAG Program has been eliminated in the proposed FY05 budget. We ask that the Committee fully fund JABG at its authorized level of \$350 million.

The Delinquency Prevention Block Grant was created in the 2002 re-authorized JJDPa by consolidating five previously separate funding streams. The DPBG funds activities designed to prevent and reduce juvenile crime in communities which have a comprehensive juvenile crime prevention plan. Eligible recipients include community-based organizations, law enforcement agencies, local education authorities, local governments, social service providers and other entities with a demonstrated history of involvement in juvenile delinquency prevention. We ask that the Committee fund the Delinquency Prevention Block Grant at \$126 million in FY2005 – this is the total of the five separate funding streams when DPBG was created in FY 2003.

Over the past several years an increasing number of earmarks have prohibited many of these programs from carrying out their primary purpose. We strongly recommend that no more than 25% of these discretionary funds are earmarked for other purposes.

At a time when the juvenile crime rate is lower than it has been in a generation, we simply cannot stand by and watch our hard-earned progress slip away. We owe it to our child and youth advocates, justice system personnel, community-based service providers and – most of all – to the children whose very futures depend on us, to continue to support prevention and intervention programs with this absolutely vital funding.

Thank you very much for your consideration in support of critical investments to help our children achieve their fundamental birthright – lives of health, productivity, and freedom.

Sincerely,

Kevin Ryan
New Jersey Child Advocate

Cc: Governor James McGreevey
Treasurer John McCormac
Attorney General Peter Harvey
Howard Beyer, Executive Director, Juvenile Justice Commission